Minorities, language politics and language planning in Europe

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Jeroen Darquennes

1. Introduction

In terms of figures, linguistic diversity in Europe does not really amount to anything much on a world scale. Yet, linguistic diversity is high on the European political agenda. In their quest for diversity in unity, the Council of Europe and the European Union show a special concern for the preservation and promotion of minority languages in times of globalization. The reasons for this concern are manifold and range from the cultural value attached to languages to the symbolic role of languages in ensuring the political stability in language minority settings. With the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992) the Council of Europe developed a legal tool aiming at a culturally and politically inspired preservation and promotion of linguistic diversity on the territories of its member states. Against the background of a general description of the situation of language minorities in Europe, this contribution will especially focus on the European Charter. It will briefly describe its contents and will scrutinize the way in which the Charter links up with current language planning theory and practice. To conclude, this contribution will tackle a number of research desiderata that could advance both the contact linguistic study of language planning and language politics as well as the actual situation of Europe's indigenous language minorities.

2. Language minorities in Europe

The public and political discourse surrounding language minorities in Europe distinguishes in a rather generalizing way between allochthonous (or 'new') minorities and autochthonous (or 'old') minorities. The 'new' minorities consist of migrant workers or asylum seekers who recently (i.e. in most cases in the second half of the 20th century or later) settled in a European state. Examples are the Turks

in Belgium, the Portuguese in Luxembourg or the Moroccans in Spain. The 'old' minorities consist of communities that have lived in their respective territories for centuries. Examples are the Aromanians in Greece, the Welsh in the UK, the Sami in Sweden, the Livonians in Latvia, and the Hungarians in Slovakia. In this chapter the focus will be on the 'old' minorities.

Although no commonly agreed definition of the term 'autochthonous language minority' exists (cf. Extra and Gorter 2006 for a discussion), there is a consensus among contact linguists that the characteristics of an autochthonous language minority are mainly to be seen as a difference in terms of its linguistic and cultural distinctiveness, and the inequality concerning its social status and its position *vis-à-vis* the dominant majority (cf. Rindler Schjerve 2006: 108). In Section 1 of *Euromosaic I. The production and reproduction of minority language groups in the European Union,* Peter Nelde, Miquel Strubell and Glyn Williams (1996: 10–12) expound the link between the differences in social status and power relations of the minority vs. the majority, on the one hand, and the role of the minority language as opposed to the majority language, on the other hand. Within a language sociological framework they convincingly argue that the differences in social status and power position as they exist between the minority and the majority are reflected in the lower prestige, the lower status and the less developed (in some cases: poorly developed or even non-existing) legitimisation and institutionalisation of the minority language *vis-à-vis* the majority language. As a consequence, language very often develops into a significant symbol of social conflict in minority settings, even when it may not be the direct cause of the conflict (cf. Inglehart and Woodward 1967; Nelde 2006). Especially during the ethnic revival in the 1960s and 1970s many simmering conflicts in indigenous language minority settings came to the surface and illustrated the great destabilisation potential of language minorities and the specific role of language in (neutralizing) social conflict. It is hardly a coincidence that precisely in the decades following the ethnic revival the situation of indigenous language minorities increasingly appeared on national and international political agendas.

Shortly after its first direct election in 1979 the European Parliament passed a series of resolutions on the need to preserve the language and culture of European autochthonous language minorities (cf. EBLUL 2003 for an overview). In 1984 the Council of Europe organised a public hearing on regional and minority languages in Strasbourg. In 1995 that same Council published the Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities. This convention entered into force in 1998. It grants individual rights to members of national minorities, including a relatively small number of language rights. A document that, however, solely focuses on languages and more specifically on the preservation of minority languages in most of the aspects of the life of its speakers is the Council of Europe's European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. It was published in 1992 and entered into force in 1998. The Charter holds an important position as a frame of reference in

European discussions on the preservation of linguistic diversity. Parayre (2008: 125), for example, points out that the European Parliament in its 2006 Resolution on Multilingualism called on its Member States to comply with the Charter and to cooperate in a closer way with the Council of Europe's Language Policy Division.

Since the Charter influences the development of a minority language policy on the level of the EU and the Council of Europe's member states, it seems appropriate to elucidate this document against the background of contemporary views on language planning. First, however, the discussion turns to a general description of its contents, based both on the text of the Charter and the explanatory report that accompanies it.

3. The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

Next to a preamble the Charter consists of five parts: general provisions (Part I), objectives and principles (Part II), measures to promote the use of regional or minority languages in public life (Part III), application of the charter (Part IV) and final provisions (Part V).

The Charter's overall objective is that parties who ratify the Charter will respect and will attune or continue to attune their policies, legislation and practice to the preservation and promotion of all regional and minority languages on their territory (Art. 7). Regional or minority languages are defined as languages that are (i) traditionally used within a given territory of a state by nationals of that state who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the state's population, and (ii) different from the official language(s) of that state (Art. 1). Regional languages are languages spoken (either by a majority of the citizens or not) in a limited part of the territory of a state. Minority languages are languages either spoken by persons who are not concentrated on a specific part of the territory of a state or spoken by a group of people that, though geographically concentrated on a part of the state, is numerically smaller than the population that speaks the majority language. The Charter does not specify which languages correspond to the concept of regional or minority languages. Yet, Art. 1a states that the charter includes neither dialects of the official language(s) of a state nor the languages of migrants.

As far as the measures to promote the use of regional or minority languages in public life are concerned, the Charter lists slightly more than 100 measures that pertain to the following areas: education (Art. 8), judicial authorities (Art. 9), administrative authorities and public services (Art. 10), media (Art. 11), cultural activities and facilities (Art. 12), economic and social life (Art. 13) and transfrontier exchanges (Art. 14). States who ratify the Charter commit themselves to implement a minimal of 35 measures in respect of each language specified at the time of ratification. To ensure that states select measures from each of the areas in articles 8–13, three measures must be chosen from each of the articles 8 and 12, and one

from each of the articles 9, 10, 11 and 13. Whereas Part II of the Charter applies to all regional or minority languages on a state's territory, states are free to decide to which regional or minority languages on their territory the measures of Part III will apply. Thus they can choose to start with a limited number of beneficiaries and extend that number at a later stage. Article 2 even leaves open the option to sign the Charter without selecting any language for the purposes of the application of Part III.

Within the year following the Charter's entry into force, each state has to present a report to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in which the policy pursued in accordance with Part II of the Charter and the measures taken (Part III) are explained. The other reports have to be submitted in intervals of three years. A Committee of Experts examines these public reports. This committee prepares a report for the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers. That report is accompanied by the comments that the states have been requested to make and may be made public by the Committee of Ministers. The Committee of Ministers itself hands its recommendations over to the states. The whole monitoring process is documented on the website of the Council of Europe (www.coe.int).

At present 23 of the 47 member states of the Council of Europe have ratified the Charter and 10 have signed it. Of the EU's 27 member states 16 have ratified, 3 have signed, and 8 have neither signed nor ratified it. In the case of those EU Member States who signed but did not ratify the Charter, the ratification process has not really started yet (the case of Malta) or is mainly hampered by constitutional and/or political problems (the case of France and Italy, though the latter seems to be close to ratification). In case of the EU Member States that did not sign the Charter the reasons are more diverse:

- The Belgian government seems to fear that an acceptance of the Charter and especially of the minority language criteria used in the Charter could undermine the territorial linguistic equilibrium as it has been cemented in the language laws of the 1960s – laws that helped to create political stability after a period of civic turmoil following World War II.
- In Bulgaria and Greece it seems hard to find a consensus on those regional or minority languages to which the Charter could or should apply. Language related ethno-religious conflicts and the fear of a fragmentation of the national fabric to the example of some of the neighbouring Balkan states complicate the discussions in Greece.
- The Baltic States are still too preoccupied with the reassessment of their national languages and the repositioning of the Russian language to devote much attention to the Charter.
- The problem in Ireland is that Irish has a double status: it is the only minority language but at the same time it is the first official language of the Republic.
- With its estimated 10,000 speakers of Mirandese and its estimated 5000 speakers of Caló (an Iberian Romani language) Portugal apparently does not really feel the need to complement the existing legislation on minority languages with provisions from the Charter.

After this short and generalizing sketch of some states' reluctance to sign the Charter, the following paragraphs turn to a discussion of the link between the Charter and existing views on language planning.

4. The Charter against the background of language planning theory and practice

Both the Charter and the explanatory report broadly correspond to the state of the art of language planning theory at the beginning of the 1990s. Following the basic corpus-status distinction as made by Haugen (e.g. 1969) and Kloss (e.g. 1969) and the extension provided by Cooper (1989), the Charter proposes measures in all three branches of language planning: corpus, status, and acquisition planning. Corpus planning mainly implies the standardization and/or elaboration of the lexicon, grammar and the orthography of a given language. Status planning aims at changing the societal status and the functional range of a given language without necessarily aiming at an increase of the number of people actually using this language or language variety. Acquisition planning, finally, aims at an increase of the number of users of a given language.

In the field of acquisition planning the Charter recommends the availability of education in the regional or minority language on all levels of education ranging from kindergarten to adult education (Art. 8). To raise the status of a language the Charter (Art. 9–13) promotes measures in a number of domains of language use that have featured prominently in sociolinguistics since the early 1960s and were at that time adapted from the work of Georg Schmidt-Rohr (e.g. 1933). Corpus planning in the context of the Charter is mainly related to translation and terminological activities (i) supporting the role of the language in the media and the courts and (ii) aiming at the maintenance and development of administrative, commercial, economic, social, technical or legal terminology (cf. Art. 9 and 12). Those measures directed at the training of minority language teachers and the availability of minority language education also imply (a concern for) corpus planning issues.

By leaving the choice of appropriate measures for each of the selected minority languages on their territory to the member states themselves, the Charter acknowledges the necessity of tailor-made approaches in language planning. This is rooted in Haugen's ecology of language and repeated in Joshua Fishman's groundbreaking work on *Reversing Language Shift* (1991). The fact that the CoE's member states who ratify the charter are obliged to select language planning measures in the different areas of language use mentioned in articles 8–13 can be linked to

Haugen and Fishman's plea for the development of complementary and mutually reinforcing language planning measures in different domains of language use (cf. also Cooper 1989). Moreover, the system of reporting and monitoring links the Charter to the necessity for language planning evaluation (cf. Rubin 1983).

This short sketch makes clear that the skeletal structure of the Charter beyond any doubt corresponds to the basics of language planning theory at the beginning of the 1990s. Yet, the Charter also contains a number of flaws.

Although Art. 1a of the Charter and point 32 of the explanatory report explicitly state that the Charter does not concern local varieties or different dialects of one and the same language, the explanatory report in the same point also emphasizes that the charter does not pronounce itself on the often-disputed question of which forms of language constitute separate languages. No wonder, then, that the extensive lobbying of inventive pressure groups results precisely in the official recognition of such local speech forms as regional or minority languages (cf. the situation of Limburgish and Lower Saxonian in The Netherlands). By passing on the language-dialect question to the member states without even providing compulsory criteria that should be used to underpin their decisions, the Charter not only opens the door for the recognition of what Hans Goebl (2002) – building on Kloss' original *Abstand-Ausbau* distinction – has referred to as dream and ghost languages. It also provides the member states with the possibility to 'recover' regional or minority languages as mere dialects of the national language.

Linguists not only frown upon the way in which the Charter subverts the demarcation of its planning object, i.e. regional or minority *languages*. They also criticise the fact that on the level of the Council of Europe no instruments seem to exist that could help bridge the at times considerable gap between the theoretically envisaged straightforward process of selecting, elaborating, implementing and evaluating appropriate language planning measures and tortuous daily state politics. This critique is backed up by jurists' analyses of the Charter and the way it is treated by the Council of Europe's member states.

From Pfeil (2003: 32–33) one can derive that the selection of language planning measures by the Council of Europe's member states is certainly not always the result of a dedicated search for the most appropriate measures. The selection is rather influenced by budgetary constraints and the efforts governments are willing to invest in the promotion of an indigenous language minority as only one of many points on the agenda during a period of government. As a consequence, the temptation to opt for at least a number of measures that can easily be elaborated and implemented is never far away. Furthermore, the elaboration and implementation of those language planning measures that are eventually selected is slowed down because of deficient communication between central and regional/local authorities and/or uncertainties regarding the overall and final (financial) responsibility for the implementation of the Charter – a responsibility that is vested with the state (cf. Parayre 2008: 128). Although the defects in the process of selecting, elaborating and implementing measures are not entirely kept out of the states' reports, critical reading is needed to balance the reports (cf. de Varennes 2008: 33). The same creativity with which states report on the implementation of minority language planning measures also shines through the way in which they manage to ignore part of the recommendations made by the Committee of Ministers (cf. Parayre 2008: 129).

With the ultimate aim of smoothening the whole minority language planning process envisaged by the Charter, the European Parliament and especially its Intergroup for Traditional National Minorities, Constitutional Regions and Regional Languages (founded in 1988) try to exert pressure on the Council of Europe's member states. The Intergroup thus adds to the indirect diplomatic pressure on member states as it is also exerted by the Council of Europe's Committee of Experts that – as Parry (2008: 269) expresses it – has the advantage of being able to fuel national/regional debates with external and international detached expertise. Yet, the Committee of Experts is in need of more means and instruments to effectively accomplish its task. The same applies to the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe with which the Committee of Experts cooperates.

As early as in 2001, on the occasion of the international conference 'From Theory to Practice – The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages', Gijs de Vries, at that time State Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations in The Netherlands, suggested to create a database with the details of everything European countries are "doing to improve the position of regional or minority languages and to implement the intent of the charter" (cf. Council of Europe 2001: 10). He considered a database the appropriate means to gauge and compare measures in the field of language minorities and to develop 'best practices'. Fernand de Varennes shared his opinion and Donall O'Riagain, the former president of EBLUL, added on to it by suggesting the establishment of a European centre for linguistic diversity that "would serve as a clearing-house for language planning, for data gathering and for the sharing of expertise" (cf. Council of Europe 2001: 18; 26). Similar propositions were presented at an international conference on the Charter in Swansea in 2006 (cf. Council of Europe 2008).

Anticipating a more systematic collection of best practices in minority language planning, the next paragraphs list a number of general points of interest in relation to the three branches of language planning in European minority settings today:

Status planning – Generally speaking, the main concern of language minorities in Europe most certainly is the increase of the societal status and the spread of the functional range of the minority language in order to try and ensure the survival of the minority language. Regions such as Catalonia, Wales and South-Tyrol serve as longstanding shining examples on how to proceed. Language planning agencies in these regions consciously and successfully aim at a coordinated harmonization of

language use in such sectors of society as education, social welfare, administration, culture and (local) economy, starting out from the belief that in terms of language use supply creates demand rather than its axiomatic converse. Next to coordinated efforts, however, spontaneous (or grassroots) efforts also are largely responsible for language revival and maintenance in Catalonia, Wales and South-Tyrol. Since spontaneous activities are hardly documented, the chances that they will be ignored or only briefly touched upon in a list of best practices is rather great. Yet, a stronger consideration for the systematic and comparative analysis of (un)successful (un)planned language planning activities at the grassroots level in well-known as well as hardly known minority settings could especially be of interest to such language minorities that – contrary to the Catalans, the Welsh or the South-Tyroleans – do not have a strong autonomy and do not have a large number of financial and institutional means at their disposal. The SMiLE-report, which examines 17 different (grassroots) interventions in favour of regional or minority languages in various settings and specifically looks at the goals, the outcomes and the cost-effectiveness of the interventions, could serve as an example on how to proceed (cf. Grin et al. 2002).

Acquisition planning – Language minorities facing a situation in which the intergenerational continuity of the minority language in the home, family and neighbourhood is interrupted tend to strongly focus on acquisition planning to maintain and/or increase the number of minority language users. Certainly in Europe it seems that acquisition-planning measures have the potential to substantially contribute to language shift reversal. In their critical analysis of the regional results of the PISA-study, Weber and Nelde (2004) point out that above all regions like Catalonia, Wales and South-Tyrol make high scores. One reason for this is that these regions have successfully gone through a period of devolution and have managed to positively influence the attitudes *vis-à-vis* the minority language by promoting the position of the minority language in the local economy. Another reason for the high PISA-scores is that the regions mentioned managed to reform their educational system in compliance with sound pedagogical concepts aiming at the promotion of minority languages. Considerable attention was (and still is) paid to the share of the minority language in the curriculum, the goals of minority language education, the methods chosen to pass on the minority language, the organisation of minority language teacher training, the continuity of minority language education on all school levels, and the link between education and extra-curricular activities of all sorts are all well-considered. A catalogue of best practices should especially highlight these pedagogical considerations if it is meant to help not only the strong minority language communities to transcend the (in language minority surroundings often experienced) pre-occupation with strengthening the language in the folkloristic space and to relegate the intergenerational transmission of the minority language to kindergartens and/or primary schools. Good examples on how to mould

general principles on minority language education in such a way that they fit the own language minority setting can be found on the website of the Istitut Régional de Recherche Educative in Val d'Aoste (Italy) (www.irre-vda.org).

Corpus planning – In the European political discourse on language minorities corpus planning, i.e. the codification (involving graphization, grammatication and lexication) and elaboration (involving terminological modernization and stylistic development) of minority languages, is hardly mentioned. It seems that corpus planning is thought of as something that goes without saying. Nothing is, however, further from the truth. Corpus planning even poses a constant challenge to established institutions such as the *Fryske Akademy* (in Ljouwert/Leeuwarden, the Netherlands), *Euskaltzaindia* (the Basque Language Academy in Bilbo/Bilbao, Spain) and the *Sorbski Institut* (in Budyšin/Bautzen, Germany). Corpus planners working in these institutions do not only have to codify and elaborate their minority language in a setting that is characterized by intense language contact and subject to the pressure of English as a lingua franca. They also experience that their work is not purely linguistic but is heavily intertwined with the social context they work in. This context influences the selection of a norm that precedes codification and it also influences the elaboration of the codified language. Corpus planners are doomed to experience how different forces in society attach emotional values to specific historically grown linguistic varieties and sometimes experience the rejection of specific features of their own variety almost as a denial of their linguistic identity. The emotional factor attached to codification explains why in the process of codification most often attempts are made to merge features of the existing varieties. Yet, this not always proves to be an ideal solution.

In a recent attempt to create a common Ladin standard in Northern Italy the corpus planners of SPELL (*Servisc de Planificazion y Elaborazion dl Lingaz Ladin*) were confronted with the choice of either promoting one of the written varieties used in the valleys of the Ladin Dolomites to the Ladin standard, or trying to develop a new standard Ladin, based on common characteristics of all the written varieties used in the valleys. They finally decided to choose the second option. Building on the work of the Swiss professor Heinrich Schmid the SPELL-team developed a grammar for and a dictionary in standard Ladin (cf. wwww.spell-termles.ladinia.net). Hope existed that SPELL's endeavors would lead to a general acceptance of 'Ladin Dolomitan' as a unified written variety of Ladin that could help to further status and acquisition planning measures (e.g. the production of teaching materials, the availability of laws and administrative documents in the minority language, etc.). This hope, however, was in vain. Shortly after Ladin Dolomitan was launched, the government of South-Tyrol decided to formally exclude it from all its legal texts, publications and websites. At the local level, Ladin Dolomitan is also hardly used in the administration and its use in schools is blocked in favor of local idioms.

The Ladin example shows that the road to the spread of the new norm is a hard and weary one and quite some institutional support and a positive social and political climate is needed for it to settle down in the language community. A list of best practices in language planning should not ignore the issue of corpus planning and could especially benefit from in-depth research on the sociology of corpus planning and especially on the political forces that (try to) influence corpus planning decisions. Not only the study of corpus planning, but also the study of status and acquisition planning could profit from a greater consideration of the way in which political forces at *all* levels of society (try to) influence language planning decisions.

5. Outlook: on language politics

Research on the relationship between language and politics has long concentrated on the treatment of language issues on the institutional political level and the level of party politics, i.e. those levels of society at which official language policies are given shape[1]. Pioneering work in this respect was done by the Canadian political scientist Kenneth D. McRae. Inspired by Inglehart and Woodward's (1967) exploration of the relationship between linguistic concentration and political stability McRae started a series on *Conflict and Compromise in Multilingual Societies* in the 1980s. It currently consists of three volumes: one on Switzerland published in 198[illegible], one on Belgium published in 1986 and one on Finland published in 1997. In the series, McRae for each of the selected countries identifies when and how basic divisions in social structure become politicized, how they escalate into political conflicts, when and how attempts are made to moderate and/or resolve these conflicts and to which degree social or political cleavages become incorporated in the structure of formal institutions. McRae shows a primary concern for the language dimension as a form of social cleavage. The framework to investigate the language dimension in each of the three volumes is organized around four main headings: historical traditions and developmental patterns, with special reference to the evolution of the language groups (including language minorities) and language politics; (2) the social and demographic structure of the language groups, and relationships between language divisions and other social divisions; (3) the perceptions and attitudes of the language communities, and how these attitudes have been mobilized or manifested in political parties or other associations; and (4) constitutional and constitutional arrangements concerning languages (McRae 1997: 1–2). Although McRae from the 1980s onwards influenced the works of such linguists working on language conflict or those interested in discourse analytical approaches to language ideology and language tensions (cf. recent work in the *Journal of Language and Politics* edited by Ruth Wodak and Paul Chilton and published by John Benjamins), he long remained one of the very few political scientists to systematically tackle the

relationship between language and politics. In recent years, however, this field of study has gained vigor. In the wake of the EU's debate and focus on regionalism, political scientists mainly interested in ethno-politics, the nation-state-question and/or multi-level governance increasingly started to pay some of their attention to the interplay between (the debate on) regional autonomy and (the shaping of) language politics, policy and planning in the EU (cf., Keating 1998, De Winter et al. 2006). More importantly, however, political science in recent years also produced a number of volumes explicitly devoted to the possible contribution of political theory and policy analysis to the societal management of linguistic diversity.

In 2003 Will Kymlicka and Alan Patten edited a volume on *Language Rights and Political Theory*. The book examines the issue of linguistic diversity and linguistic rights from the perspective of normative political theory. Following Kymlicka and Grin (2003: 16), the leading question behind this approach is *what* society should do in favor of language preservation and *why* some actions may be said to be more justified than others. Spurred on by François Grin, this rather theoretical-philosophical approach has been complemented by a language policy analysis approach that studies *how* society's goals regarding linguistic diversity can be reached and if some way of reaching them is preferable to other ways. It does so by analyzing and interpreting various legal, international, political, economic, demographic, historic and cultural factors determining language policy. This analysis takes place against the background of larger systems of values, beliefs and political ideologies (cf. Grin 2003; Kymlicka and Grin 2003: 19–21).

As can be witnessed in the case studies listed in the book *Nation-Building, Ethnicity and Language Politics in Transition Countries* (2003) edited by Farimah Daftary and François Grin, the language policy analysis approach that covers issues related to the status, the corpus as well as the acquisition of languages not only addresses the institutional level and the level of party politics but all politically relevant levels of society. It thus meets the long standing desideratum that political science should extend its scope and should not only focus on the institutional side or the content side of politics but also on politics as a formal, and above all informal or sometimes hidden process (cf. von Alemann 1995: 544).

The future will show whether the still relatively young language policy approach will gain firm footing, in how far it will be able to influence and alter the existing views in the largely descriptive research on language politics, policy and planning and in how far it will be able to influence the actual language political, policy and planning practice. In terms of its obvious contribution to the development of best practices it would be a lost opportunity if all those interested in (the study of) the preservation of linguistic diversity would fail to make use of its potential.

See also the following chapters in this volume: 23 by Breu, 25 by Extra, 30 by Gilles, 34 by Wodak and 44 by Wright.

Note

1 Along the lines of francophone literature on language policy and planning, language policy is understood here as the sum-total of choices and objectives that – following a political process – are meant to regulate (the use of) languages in social life. Language planning aims at the realization of these choices and objectives through concrete measures (cf. Labrie 1996 for a broader discussion).

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30 Language policies at the Germanic-Romance language border: the case of Belgium, Luxembourg and Lorraine

Peter Gilles

1. Introduction

This chapter explores the sociolinguistic dynamics in speech communities located on the Germanic-Romanic language border by presenting three case studies for Belgium, Luxembourg and the province of Lorraine in France. The specific multilingual situation in these countries is the result of a long lasting (socio)linguistic contact between Germanic and Romance language varieties. In the first section the overall development of the language border will be discussed. The following sections will then deal with the developments of the language situation for the three speech communities. It will become clear that socio-political developments have led to different kinds of contact situations and different multilingual societies.

2. The development of the Germanic-Romance language border

The language border separating Germanic from Romance languages/varieties emerged during the late Roman Empire and stabilized in the 11th century. It begins geographically in the west at the border between France and Belgium (near Boulogne and Calais) and then runs more or less horizontally through Belgium. Close to the Belgian eastern frontier, the language border then moves southwards along the western border of Luxembourg, Lorraine and Alsace. It then enters Switzerland and divides the territory, roughly speaking, into a western French-speaking area and an eastern German-speaking area. In southern Switzerland the language border turns eastwards and enters Italy (van Durme 2002). Surprisingly, this language border has been relatively stable since the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, on both